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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 001551

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E STAFF FOR AMY WESTLING
P STAFF FOR DAVID VAN CLEVE
EEB/EPPD FOR SANDRA CLARK
NSC FOR PAUL BROWN AND MICHAEL SMART
A/EX/PTS FOR CHRIS SZYMANSKY

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: G8 COMMISSIONER BERTOLASO ON SUMMIT LOGISTICS

REF: ROME DAILY REPORT 12-5-08

¶1. (U) Sensitive but Unclassified. Please Protect Accordingly.

¶2. (SBU) Summary: G8 Summit Commissioner Guido Bertolaso, Prime Minister Berlusconi's Commissioner in charge of logistics for the July 8-10 2009 Summit at La Maddalena, told the DCM on December 19 that construction of the two hotels and convention center for the Summit will be completed by May ¶2009. Delegate overflow will be accommodated on a cruise ship and in hotels on the Costa Smeralda of Sardinia (about 15-30 minutes by boat from La Maddalena), although he understood that U.S. security concerns preclude lodging the U.S. President on a ship. He dismissed press reports that Berlusconi is planning on hosting the G8 leaders in Rome after the Summit. The apron at the International Airport at Olbia is being extended by 300 meters and G8 leaders will be transported from there to La Maddalena by helicopter. End Summary.

¶3. (SBU) The DCM, Management MinCouns and Poloff met on December 19 with Guido Bertolaso, Director of the Prime Minister's Civil Defense Department and G8 Summit Commissioner, and Marta Di Gennaro, his Deputy in charge of G8 preparations. Bertolaso, who has held the position since 2001, has overall responsibility for disaster preparedness and major international events on Italian soil, such as the NATO Pratica di Mare Summit of 2002 and the funeral of Pope John Paul II. He currently holds responsibility for the G8 Summit preparations at La Maddalena, Sardinia, and, as Undersecretary for the Campania Region, has had the lead on the Naples garbage crisis.

¶4. (SBU) The DCM thanked him for his help facilitating the work of the U.S. Navy Health Assessment team in Naples and for his close cooperation with the Embassy over the past seven years. She asked how summit preparations were going and inquired about press reports that PM Berlusconi is planning on hosting G8 leaders on a cruise ship or in Rome after the Summit. Bertolaso said that he was aware of U.S. concerns about lodging the President on a ship and assured us that this would not happen. While he did not rule out

bilateral meetings in Rome with some G8 leaders, he said that accommodating the entire group in Rome or elsewhere would be logistically impossible and would not hesitate to tell Berlusconi so if the situation required it.

¶15. (SBU) Bertolaso said construction at the summit site had been difficult but would be finished by May 2009. La Maddalena, the largest of an archipelago of islands off the northeast coast of Sardinia, is home to an Italian naval base (and, until February 2008, a U.S. Submarine Tender base) and has therefore never developed a sizeable hotel and tourism infrastructure. The government is building two new five-star hotels and a convention center on the site of the Italian base. Bertolaso suggested we would be able to choose the venue that would best suit our delegation. The hotels will be large, but space allotments for each delegation will depend upon how many delegations the GOI decides to invite ("I can't accommodate a 500 member delegation in the hotels") although there would be facilities for overflow, including two five-star hotels, on the main island of Sardinia. There will be a secure "red zone," as in the 2001 Genoa Summit, and barriers to protect ships in the harbor.

¶16. (SBU) Delegate and staff overflow will be housed in the hotels along the Costa Smeralda (Emerald Coast), the north-east shore of Sardinia that faces La Maddalena, and on the 1,600-cabin mega-cruise ship "MSC Fantasia" that the GOI has chartered for the Summit. (Note: At the December 4 press conference officially announcing the summit venue and format (REF A), Bertolaso said that the GOI's goal was to accommodate up to thirty national and institutional

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delegations, 4,500 delegates, 4,500 press and 2,000 support personnel. The press will be housed in Olbia, a port and airport hub about 30 miles south of La Maddalena).

¶17. (SBU) Bertolaso said the apron at the Olbia International Airport, where all delegation flights will arrive, can currently accommodate an Air Force One-sized aircraft, but will nevertheless be expanded by an additional 300 meters. He indicated that many delegation flights will have to drop off delegations at Olbia and transit to Decimomannu Air Force Base (a 15 minute flight south) to park. Heads of government will transit from Olbia to La Maddalena by helicopter.

¶18. (SBU) Comment: Bertolaso, who also heads the Prime Minister's Emergency Management Office (FEMA equivalent) and has overall responsibility for the Naples garbage crisis, has a reputation for getting difficult things done and has the legal authority to override Italian building and environmental regulations to prepare for the Summit. However, as the director of the equivalent of FEMA, his time and energies have been split between the summit, the Naples garbage crisis, flooding in Rome and avalanches in the Alps. GOI budget cuts have not made his work easier. Bertolaso himself has told Parliament that the estimated Euro 400 million Summit construction project could face significant cost overruns and schedule delays. Shortly after his meeting with the DCM he told the press that he would resign if Parliament did not grant his 2009 budget request, prompting Berlusconi to make public assurances that his needs would be met. Bertolaso is clearly the right person for the job, but whether he can deliver the Summit that Berlusconi wants in an austere budget environment is still open to question. The Embassy plans to make an initial trip to La Maddalena January 12-13 to survey the site. End Comment.

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